



Central Palmerston AREA PLAN

Stage 2
Consultation report

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On 25 June 2020, the Northern Territory Planning Commission commenced the second stage of public consultation for the Central Palmerston Area Plan, by releasing a draft Area Plan and Needs Assessment. Consultation ran through to 7 August 2020.

The draft Central Palmerston Area Plan builds on the overarching direction provided by the Darwin Regional Land Use Plan 2015, and has been drafted with regard to studies and community consultation undertaken in Stage One.

To inform the drafting of an Area Plan for the Central Palmerston Area, the Planning Commission endorsed a Community Engagement Strategy that identified the Area Plan would be prepared in three stages (Figure 1).

This report summarises key feedback expressed by stakeholders during Stage Two consultation. This feedback will assist the Planning Commission in finalising the Area Plan for consideration by the Minister.

The Consultation Process

The Planning Commission has adopted a three-stage engagement approach to consultation on the development of the Central Palmerston Area Plan.

- **Stage One** of the consultation process was an opportunity for information gathering and analysis, and included community engagement during July and August 2019.
- **Stage Two** comprised the preparation and publication of a draft Area Plan, informed by the community feedback received in Stage One.
- **Stage Three** is the finalisation of the draft Area Plan by the NT Planning Commission. It will then be recommended to the Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics as a proposed Planning Scheme Amendment.

This report summarises the second stage of the consultation process and the key themes identified by the community, government agencies, and other stakeholder groups.

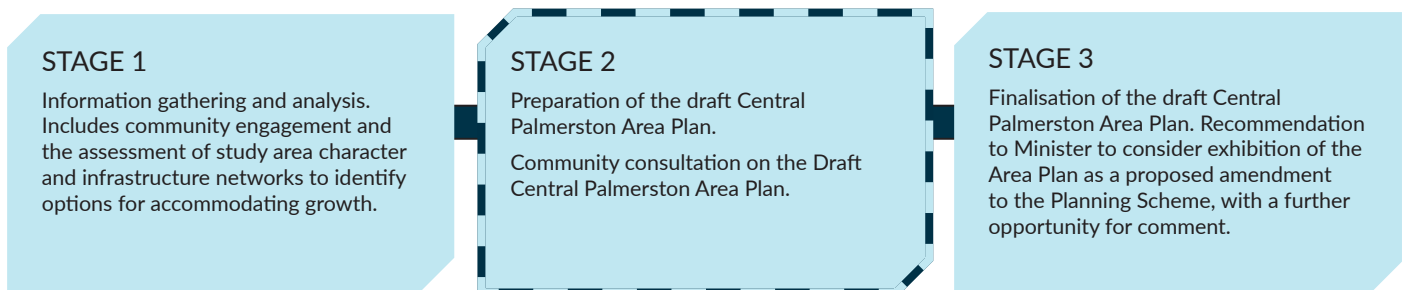


Figure 1. Process for preparing the Central Palmerston Area Plan



Figure 2. Study area map

Study Area

The study area lies within the municipality of the City of Palmerston. Palmerston is the second-largest city in the Northern Territory, located 20km from the Territory's capital, Darwin. Palmerston has a young population with a median age of 30 years, with a high number of young families and Defence personnel. Aboriginal people make up 11.3% of the population.

The study area boundary includes the Palmerston Central Business District (CBD) as well as recent development that has occurred in areas around the city centre and adjacent areas zoned Service Commercial and Light Industrial (Figure 2).

The study area builds on and will supersede the existing Palmerston City Centre Area Plan in the NT Planning Scheme 2020. Focus Areas are identified within the study area that have unique qualities and opportunities. The study area includes three Focus Areas: North Link, the Boulevard precinct and South Link.

Significant influences outside the study area include Robertson Barracks, the Palmerston Regional Hospital and surrounding low and medium density residential suburbs.

The Draft Area Plan

The draft Central Palmerston Area Plan envisions Central Palmerston as a desirable destination to live, work and play.

Welcoming public spaces and high quality built form will provide opportunities for inner city living and will re-establish the city centre as a safe, vibrant and enjoyable place, with a focus on shopping, entertainment, hospitality and celebrating culture.

A rejuvenated city centre and continued service commercial and light industrial uses within Yarrowonga will support economic and employment growth, underpinned by an effective multi-modal transport network.

The Area Plan acknowledges the important role Central Palmerston plays in providing key services and employment opportunities to the wider region that includes East Arm, Holtze, Howard Springs, Coolalinga, Virginia and Humpty Doo.

The Area Plan has been informed by a draft Needs Assessment that contains a record of investigations and community feedback. The Needs Assessment is publicly available and can be consulted where there are questions about interpretation of the policy position set out in the draft Area Plan.



Consultation Objectives

Stage Two consultation revisited the themes and issues identified by stakeholders in Stage One and presented the draft Central Palmerston Area Plan and Needs Assessment for comment.

Stakeholders included:

- Palmerston residents and visitors;
- local businesses and employees;
- City of Palmerston (Council);
- local MLAs;
- government agencies and departments;
- industry associations and representative bodies; and
- special interest and community groups.

Stage Two community consultation was undertaken by the Planning Commission over a seven week period from Thursday 25 June 2020 to Friday 7 August 2020.

Stage Two engagement sought to:

- seek feedback on the draft Central Palmerston Area Plan and Needs Assessment;
- confirm previous stakeholder input has been appropriately translated into the draft Central Palmerston Area Plan;
- give stakeholders a sense of ownership over the Central Palmerston Area;
- raise awareness of the role of the Planning Commission generally; and
- educate stakeholders on to role of the Area Plan and planning policy generally.

Consultation Activities

Community members, industry groups and NT Government departments identified as stakeholders in the endorsed communications engagement strategy were engaged using the following methods:

- print advertising in the NT News;
- social media;
- interactive surveys on the 'Have Your Say' website;
- a dedicated page on the Planning Commission website that included times and dates of public displays, contact details to receive submissions, answer enquiries, and an online feedback form;
- pop-up stalls at the Gateway Shopping Centre, Palmerston Markets, Palmerston Shopping Centre and Oasis Shopping Centre;
- community information sessions;
- online industry forums;
- postcards mailed out to approximately 400 landowners in the study area;
- availability of project materials at Palmerston Library for the duration of the consultation period; and
- flyers hand delivered to approximately 100 businesses in the CBD and Yarrowonga.

Community Engagement Activities

Pop-Ups and Community Information Sessions

The community had several opportunities to receive information on the project, and to provide verbal and written feedback to the Planning Commission at the various pop-up stalls.

During the consultation period, 70 people engaged with the pop-up stalls held at Gateway Shopping Centre, Palmerston Shopping Centre, Oasis Shopping Centre and the Palmerston Markets. Pop-up stalls provided the community with the opportunity to learn about the project, engage with project staff, and to share thoughts and ideas.

Over 50 people engaged with the project team through information sessions associated with events including at a seniors morning tea event held on 21 July 2020 and an information session provided for Palmerston Youth Service providers on 28 July 2020.

Flyer Drop and Verbal Poll

Approximately 50 businesses in Yarrowonga had the opportunity to talk to the team as flyers were hand delivered. The flyers summarised the project and directed them to locations where the documentation could be viewed and where feedback could be given. Business operators in the Yarrowonga area were particularly asked their

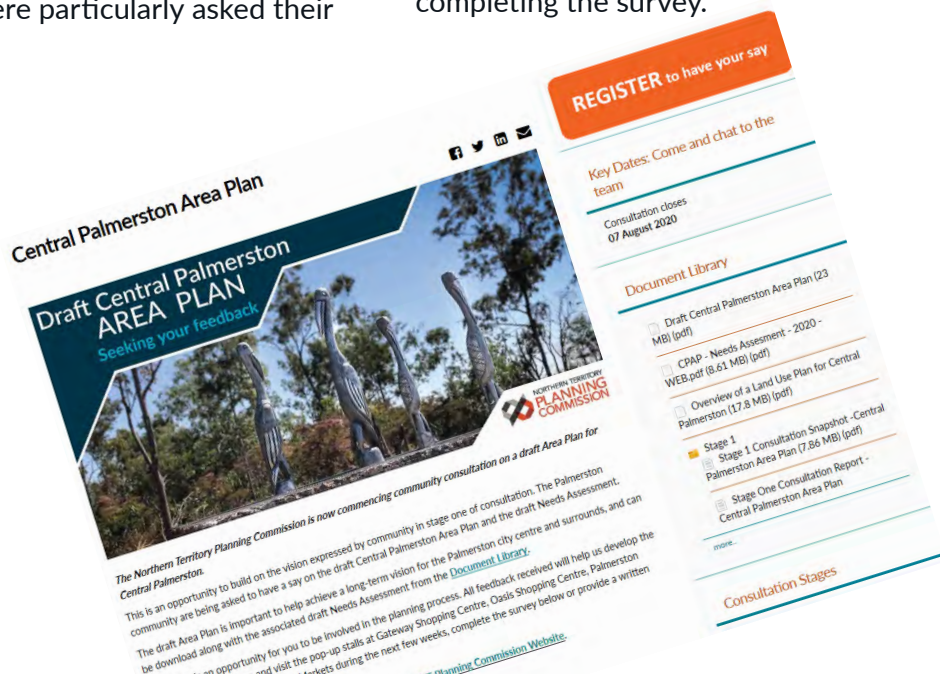
opinions on the future of that area.

Online Engagement / 'Have Your Say'

The Have Your Say online platform was utilised throughout the engagement period. The Have Your Say site provided users with project information, including the draft Area Plan and Needs Assessment documents and a survey.

The survey was a comprehensive questionnaire promoting feedback on the key themes and focus areas presented by the draft plan.

The 'Have Your Say' online portal had 405 visits, with 191 people either downloading documents or completing the survey.



Visitors Summary



Highlights

TOTAL VISITS	MAX VISITORS PER DAY
405	65

Figure 3. Visitor numbers to the 'Have Your Say' platform



Figure 4. Consultation Images

Social Media

The Planning Commission utilised its relationship with the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics to promote consultation on the draft Area Plan through the Department's social media platforms.

Social media posts promoted the availability of project information and highlighted upcoming events.

Posts to the Department's Facebook page during the consultation period reached between 500 and 7000 people per post. The posts were:

- June 25 2020 – highlighting availability of project information;
- 5 August 2020 – reminder consultation closing soon; and
- 6 August 2020 – video and reminder of consultation closing date.

Government Engagement Activities

Project Control Group

The Project Control Group (PCG) is an advisory body of government agencies with the purpose of providing strategic direction and specialist advice. The PCG consists of technical specialists from the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics (DIPL), Power and Water Corporation and the City of Palmerston.

The PCG reviewed the draft Central Palmerston Area Plan and Needs Assessment and comments were taken into consideration prior to public consultation.

Government Ministers

The Planning Commission briefed the following MLAs and government representatives:

- Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics and Member for Drysdale, Eva Lawler MLA on 4 June 2019;
- Member for Solomon, Luke Gosling OAM MP on 9 July 2019; and
- Member for Blain, Terry Mills MLA attended a pop up stall on Friday 3 July 2020.

City of Palmerston

The Planning Commission briefed the City of Palmerston Council Aldermen on 16 June 2020 ahead of launch of public engagement activities.

Industry Engagement Activities

An industry information session was held on 25 June 2020 at the Palmerston Recreation Centre, and three further online sessions were held on 1, 2 and 9 July 2020. Representatives from approximately 20 industry groups were invited to attend these sessions.

Planning Commission Chairman, Dr David Ritchie, also presented the draft Area Plan to approximately 70 Palmerston Business owners at the Palmerston and Regional Business Association's Welcome Back dinner on 30 June 2020.

Individual briefings were also provided to a number of land owners.

Media Coverage

During the engagement period there was a moderate amount of media coverage. Four advertisements were placed alongside planning notices in the NT News encouraging people to get involved. Social media was utilised and an article appeared in the NT News.

Print Media

An article 'Palmo's 50-year vision' featured in the NT News, on 30 June 2020. The article discussed some of the key messages of the consultation and included a quote from Planning Commission Chairman, Dr David Ritchie, encouraging people to have their say (see figure 6).

Social Media - Facebook

Awareness of the Planning Commission's Stage Two consultation on the draft Central Palmerston Area Plan was boosted by a number of social media posts by Government Ministers as listed below.

- 2 July 2020 – Matthew Kerle Country Liberals candidate for Blain encouraged people to stop by the Gateway Shopping Centre pop-up;
- 3 July 2020 - The Hon. Eva Lawler MLA, Minister for Infrastructure and Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics posted regarding the Planning Commission consulting at the Palmerston Markets, suggesting people call by and have their say;
- 3 July 2020 – Mr Tony Sievers MLA, Member for Brennan posted regarding the Planning Commission team consulting at the Palmerston Markets and encouraged people to come down to get more information;
- 16 July 2020 - Luke Gosling OAM MP, mentioned receiving a briefing on the project and encouraged community feedback;
- 17 July 2020 - Mr Tony Sievers MLA, Member for Brennan posted a picture of the Planning Commission team consulting at the Palmerston Markets; and
- 5 August 2020 - The Hon. Eva Lawler MLA, Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics shared the Departments' post regarding consultation closing soon.



Figure 5. Some of the social media posts and shares

Palmo's 50-year vision

WILL ZWAR

will.zwar@news.com.au

A PLAN for Palmerston's future aimed at attracting businesses and residents for the next 50 years, is out for public consultation.

The draft Central Palmerston Area Plan includes three focus areas dedicated to recreation, amenity, business and development opportunities to put Palmerston on the map.

The focus for Northlink comprising the University precinct and water park, will be improving green space with a new playground and park area, new bush tracks and a pedestrian bridge.

The Boulevard precinct comprising the CBD between Temple Tce, Chung Wah Tce, Roystonea Ave and University Ave will focus on creating a hub in the heart of Palmerston with more integrated walkways and cycling infrastructure.

There are also plans to create new streets.

Zuccoli resident Michelle Tomlinson said she would



Palmerston mum Michelle Tomlinson with her daughters Annika, 5, and Ava, 8

Picture: GLENN CAMPBELL

like to see the Palmerston pool upgraded.

"The infrastructure is ageing and there's not a lot of shade over it," she said.

Northern Territory Planning Commission chairman

David Ritchie said it was important for locals to have their say on the plans.

"The commission encourages the community to be involved to help refine the future vision for Central

Palmerston," Dr Ritchie said. "We're keen to hear the views of all stakeholders."

Residents can view the plan and have their say at the NT Planning Commission website.

There will also be pop-up stalls at Gateway on June 27, Palmerston Shopping Centre on July 3, Oasis Shopping Centre on July 16 and Palmerston Markets on July 3 and July 17.

Figure 6. NT News article published 30 June 2020



Approximately 100 people provided comments and feedback on the future of Central Palmerston by attending consultation events, talking directly with the project team or through the Have Your Say portal. Overall, the feedback received was positive and the community as a whole supported the framework that the draft Area Plan would give to development within Central Palmerston.

Feedback recorded by the project team at face to face events as well as that received through written submissions and online survey responses are summarised in this section.

Planning Themes

Engagement activities encouraged stakeholders to think about the 'Planning Themes' presented in the draft Area Plan and Needs Assessment, which included:

- Environment;
- Mixed and Commercial Use;
- Service Commercial and Light Industrial Uses;
- Movement and Transport;
- Social Infrastructure and Culture; and
- Essential Infrastructure.

Environment

The Area Plan aims to protect significant clusters of native vegetation in the study area, both for their environmental value and for the continued enjoyment of the community. This includes pockets of remnant vegetation in natural drainage lines. The draft Area Plan supports balance between future growth and maintaining the natural environment.

Feedback showed strong support for the approach taken by the draft Area Plan. The following comments were received:

- a number of respondents agreed that retaining native vegetation in Focus Area B (North Link) is important;
- many respondents showed support for green links, shading and recreation areas, including open green space.
- some respondents felt that more landscaping in the City Centre and surrounds would be beneficial to encourage pedestrian movement, with one respondent stating that additional

shading is needed between the CBD and Gateway along Roystonea Avenue, especially at bus stops;

- support for the inclusion of a Botanic Gardens was raised by a number of people at pop ups, as it would be a way to encourage more people to come into the City Centre;
- one person suggested that the gully behind the water park should be left as bushland, however, they were not opposed to a potential pedestrian path through the area;
- some respondents suggested that existing landscaping along the Boulevard should be replaced with native species, which would be more suited to the climate; and
- the heat map included in the plan was mentioned by some as being useful to help show the necessity for cooling measures.

Mixed and Commercial Use

The draft Area Plan seeks to support a mix of land uses including residential, commercial, office and community developments and the introduction of active street frontages in the City Centre.

The Area Plan presents ideas to achieve activation and revitalisation of the Palmerston City Centre. Comments received during consultation supported and encourage these ideas. Members of the community gave the following feedback:

- giving the city a 'heart ' is a good idea;
- when mixed use zones were explained and how they can encourage uses such as retail and cafes, many people supported this as they believed it would encourage more people to come into the City Centre;
- many people supported the requirement for active frontages, agreeing that passive surveillances of pedestrian areas is a good idea as it would promote pedestrian movement as people would feel safer.

The online survey asked whether respondents felt that encouraging active street frontages was important. A majority of respondents agreed this is important and could be achieved by encouraging street level cafes, art galleries and walkable plazas that will engage the community and create better social cohesion. Many respondents acknowledged that increased resident population in the city centre would be required to achieve and maintain activation.

Service Commercial and Light Industrial Uses

The Yarrowonga precinct is significant for local employment and service provision as it provides for a range of service commercial and light industrial uses. The Area Plan aims to protect these land uses to support growth for the Darwin Region.

Feedback was received that expressed concern about retail uses expanding into Yarrowonga. Respondents felt that additional retail in Yarrowonga could detract from the City Centre.

Through hand delivering flyers to business operators in Yarrowonga, the project team had the opportunity to speak with many people working in this area. Community members in Yarrowonga were asked whether they supported the continuation of the current land uses in Yarrowonga, and whether retail activities (e.g. offices and shops) should be limited. A large percentage of those questioned agreed that the current land use mix in the Yarrowonga precinct is well established and remains appropriate.

A key issue of concern identified by respondents in Yarrowonga was traffic and linkages across the Stuart Highway. Many expressed a belief that an increase in retail activities in Yarrowonga would exacerbate current traffic issues and draw people away from the City Centre.

Movement and Transport

Public and active transport is prioritised by the draft Area Plan with the provision of walkable and cycle friendly connections between destinations being a primary objective. Many people at pop-ups and information sessions agreed that this should be a priority for the City Centre and supported its inclusion in the plan.

Stakeholders agreed that pedestrian links, clear and easy to navigate cycle paths and up to date

mapping of pathways would be highly beneficial to the study area and would create more user friendly precincts. Stakeholders also stated that:

- the design of pedestrian linkages need to consider those residents with lowered mobility;
- pedestrian and cycle linkages would be highly used by residents if more shading and seating were provided.

Of those that completed surveys, most agreed the draft plan improved pedestrian and cycle networks. Further, shading these paths, way finding signage, and additional pedestrian and cyclist facilities (including bike racks) would also be a great improvement.

Social Infrastructure and Culture

Social infrastructure is key to promoting social sustainability and the well-being of the community. Sharing of community spaces and feeling connected is encouraged by the draft Area Plan. The Area Plan also provides a forecast of social infrastructure that may be necessary for future growth.

Throughout consultation, the community made a number of suggestions for social infrastructure including:

- a site in Focus Area B as a potential location for the inclusion of an Aboriginal camp;
- provision of community spaces including spaces for animals, such as a pet park, in the CBD; and
- potential for a swimming pool to be included at the existing water park.

When asked if the draft Area Plan provided enough social infrastructure and public open space the majority of survey respondents answered 'yes' but were concerned that additional social infrastructure would increase crime in the Study Area, with one person stating that when 'nice things' are included they attract vandals to the area.

Essential Infrastructure

Central Palmerston is fully serviced by reticulated power, water and sewerage and is yet to reach design capacity. It is noted that minor upgrades will be required over time.

There were no specific comments received in regarding this theme.

General Comments

Ongoing concerns were raised throughout Stage Two consultation about traffic in the Yarrowonga precinct, safety and crime within the City Centre, and the need for stricter guidelines for zoning and development.

Out of Scope Feedback

It is noted that some comments and suggestions received during Stage Two consultation are beyond the scope of the Central Palmerston Area Plan, such as:

- comments regarding active transport links or routes in the Greater Darwin Region outside of the study area;
- crime and anti-social behaviour;
- parking meter placement and operation; and
- designation of a specific school bus area at the bus interchange, or provision of a separate school-bus only interchange.

Government Agency Feedback

Comments were made from the following NT Government agencies:

Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics – Transport and Civil Services

While the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics, Transport and Civil Services division identified no objections in principle to the draft Area Plan, it was advised that:

- the 'Rapid Transport Corridor' will be continued through Roystonea Avenue and an encroachment will not be permitted;
- the Stuart Highway is protected as the national highway link and no further access (pedestrians or vehicles) will be provided to/from the Stuart Highway.

Transport and Civil Services also noted that the Area Plan does not propose any changes to the Palmerston Bus Interchange. However, any future proposal to change the use of the Bus Interchange shall be provided by the Public Transport Division.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources

The Department advised general support for the draft Area Plan and provided comment in relation to the Department's role as regulators under the *Water Management and Pollution Control Act 1998*.

A summary of the Department's comments are as follows:

- The presence of pesticide residues on land that has been used for horticulture and the presence of asbestos are land contamination issues that may be relevant to the Central Palmerston Area Plan.
- Industrial and commercial land uses have the potential to contaminate the land. A change of land use to a more sensitive land use may trigger a requirement to assess possible presence of contamination on the land. Guidance on this issue is provided under the Northern Territory Contaminated Land Guidelines.
- Potential reverse sensitivity issues were highlighted between residential development and those business types that would seek to 'enliven' the Central Palmerston Area, such as outdoor eating and entertainment areas, bars and markets. The Department expressed concern that the mix of uses in the City Centre area risks creating inter/intra zonal nuisance and land-use conflicts, and should be avoided. It further considered that the establishment of high density residential development within the Central Palmerston Area, could in the long term limit future options to enliven the central area by limiting entry of noise-generating businesses.
- Developments in Service Commercial and Light Industrial areas could have adverse impacts in terms of emissions of noise, odour and light pollution. Such impacts can be avoided by careful consideration of the design and operation of individual facilities, co-location of compatible activities, and consideration of appropriate separation distances.

- If the PLanning Commission proposes to place potentially conflicting uses in close proximity to each other consideration should be made to the NT EPA Guideline: Recommended Land Use Separation Distances and the Northern Territory Noise Management Framework Guideline.
- There is potential for noise from busy vehicle transport routes. Noise modelling should be conducted to determine potential impact of noise from traffic and light industry on residential areas.
- A map showing current and future sewer and stormwater reticulation for the Yarrowonga Industrial Precinct should be included in the Area Plan.
- increasing pedestrian and cyclist access throughout the Area Plan boundaries;
- infrastructure requirements to support the Area Plan, including:
 - road network capabilities to support proposed infrastructure (shared paths, greening, bus stops);
 - stormwater infrastructure capability;
 - suitability and design of the installation of the Chung Wah Terrace/ Temple Terrace intersection; and
 - power supply upgrades of the Palmerston or Archer sub-stations.

City of Palmerston (Council)

Council generally supported the direction outlined in the draft Central Palmerston Area Plan and noted a number of elements within the plan that Council wishes to see strengthened or amended, which would support Council's priorities.

City of Palmerston recommends:

- reference to the relocation of Council's administrative functions be removed from Principle 5.4 as Council has not determined that it will build a facility of this nature or move its administration functions;
- identifying opportunities for caravan parking within Palmerston, along with providing increased tourist attractions, would assist in providing tourism opportunities within Central Palmerston;
- wording around 'Gateway Locations' is made clearer to ensure the desired outcome;
- further clarity be provided around cultural influences in Principle 8.3;
- greater connection to and through the North Link and university area, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists; and
- additional details of desired outcomes to maximise air flow and natural cooling elements.

In relation to infrastructure, Council notes that the majority of the infrastructure identified within the Plan would either impact on or become Council assets. Council officers have commenced discussion with relevant NT Government offices relating to:

Summary

Stage Two consultation on the draft Central Palmerston Area Plan has allowed the Northern Territory Planning Commission to continue discussions with the community and stakeholders on the future of Central Palmerston.

Stakeholders had opportunities to provide feedback at pop-ups, industry briefings, individual briefings and use online resources, including social media.

There was a high level of support observed for the draft Area Plan's principles and key messages. Stakeholders were particularly supportive of the draft Area Plan's focus on the protection of significant areas of vegetation, increase in green links and public open green space, and walkability and cycle friendly initiatives.

This stage of consultation has also confirmed that many priorities identified by stakeholders in the first stage of consultation have been addressed in the draft Area Plan, including:

- improved pedestrian experience through connectivity and shading;
- more green spaces with shaded seating;
- public recreation facilities that cater for all ages;
- improved public transport networks in and around the study area;
- improved vehicle connectivity, in particular between the CBD and Yarrowonga; and
- the impact of additional retail floor space in Yarrowonga on the viability of the CBD.

Overall stakeholders responded positively to the following aspects of the plan including:

- prioritising heat mitigation strategies to reduce the 'urban heat island effect' being prioritised;
- prioritising 'green links' to establish green, shaded movement corridors between key destinations;
- mixed use buildings with the CBD;
- buildings above 8 storeys providing elements that benefit the public;
- responsive landscaping consisting of native vegetation where appropriate;
- active frontages encouraged and large blank walls discouraged;
- establishing a safe, connected and direct active transport network throughout Central Palmerston; and
- maintaining, enhancing and maximising public open spaces.

Next Steps

This report only covers community consultation and engagement during Stage Two, being consultation on the draft Central Palmerston Area Plan and Needs Assessment.

The next step is the finalisation of the draft Area Plan, incorporating comments and feedback received during consultation. The Planning Commission will then recommend the draft Area Plan to the Minister to consider formal exhibition as a proposed amendment to the NT Planning Scheme 2020, which will provide a further opportunity for comment.

The Planning Commission expects to recommend the finalised draft Area Plan to the Minister for consideration in late 2020.

Stage Three should be complete by mid 2021.

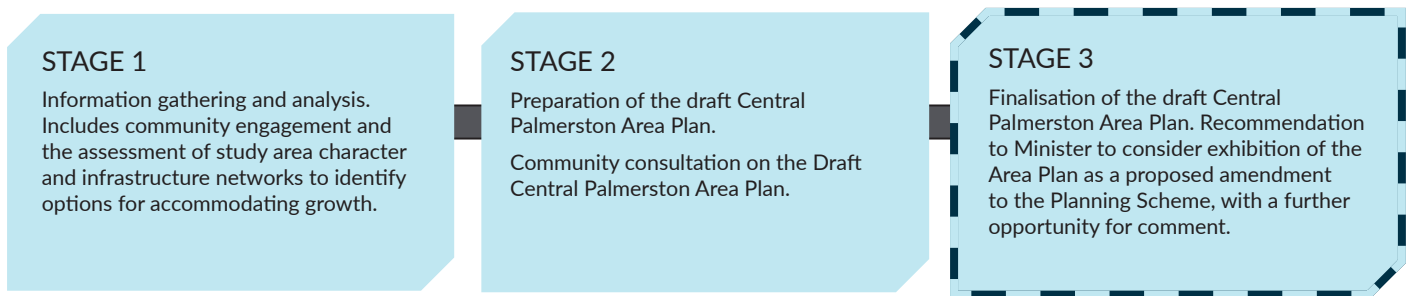


Figure 7. Stages of engagement, showing Stage Three as the next step for this project.



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